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BY WILLIAM THEIS
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WASHINGTON (UPI)--CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE DIRECTOR RICHARD HELMS, WIDELY COMPLIMENTED FOR HIS CARE WITH THE CLOAK AND DAGGER, FACED A SENATE SCOLDING TODAY FOR WIELDING A CLUMSY PEN.

THE 55-YEAR-OLD HELMS, IN OFFICE BUT A MONTH, WAS THE TARGET OF SENATE OUTRAGE THURSDAY FOR HIS LETTER TO THE ST. LOUIS GLOBE-DEMOCRAT PRAISING AN EDITORIAL REBUKE TO CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE.

HELMS CALLED FULBRIGHT THURSDAY TO SAY HE WAS SORRY ABOUT THAT AND TODAY (AT 10:30 A.M. EDT) HAD A CHANCE TO TELL FULBRIGHT IN PERSON DURING HIS SCHEDULED APPEARANCE BEFORE THE SENATOR'S COMMITTEE.

IN THE EYES OF HIS SENATE CRITICS, HELMS BLUNDERED WHEN HE WROTE THE GLOBE-DEMOCRAT IN PRAISE OF AN EDITORIAL APPLAUDING FAILURE OF THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE TO GET REPRESENTATION ON THE SENATE PANEL OVERSEEING THE CIA.

THE EDITORIAL LABELED FULBRIGHT A "CRAFTY ARKANSAN" AND SAID THE SENATE "PROPERLY REBUKED SENATOR FULBRIGHT AND GAVE THE CIA A SOUND VOTE OF CONFIDENCE."

HELM'S LETTER, PUBLISHED IN THE GLOBE-DEMOCRAT UNDER THE HEADLINE "CIA HEAD PLEASED," SAID: "I WANT TO LET YOU KNOW OF MY PLEASURE IN READING THE EDITORIAL 'BRICKBATS FOR FULBRIGHT' IN THE GLOBE-DEMOCRAT OF JULY 18.

"IT REFLECTS SO WELL YOUR PAPER'S POLICY OF 'PRINTING THE NEWS IMPARTIALLY, SUPPORTING WHAT IT BELIEVES TO BE RIGHT AND OPPOSING WHAT IT BELIEVES TO BE WRONG WITHOUT REGARD TO PARTY POLITICS.'"

SEN. EUGENE J. MCCARTHY, D-MINN., AUTHOR OF THE ORIGINAL CIA EXPANSION RESOLUTION, TOLD HIS SENATE COLLEAGUES THURSDAY HELMS' LETTER WAS "ENTIRELY OUT OF ORDER . . . HE OWES AN APOLOGY TO EVERY MEMBER OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE."

OTHER SENATORS, FROM DEMOCRATIC LEADER MIKE MANSFIELD ON DOWN, SAID THEY HAD TO AGREE, SOME IN "SHOCK" AND ALL WITH SURPRISE, THAT SUCH PUBLIC COMMENT BY AN AGENCY HEAD WAS UNQUESTIONABLY INDISCREET.

WHILE THE VOICES OF DISAPPROVAL WERE STILL RISING FROM THE SENATE FLOOR, SEN. LEVERETT SALTONSTALL, R-MASS., REPORTED HE TALKED TO HELMS DURING THE DEBATE AND THE CIA CHIEF SAID HE "WAS SORRY FOR IT."

HELMS SAID TO UPI HE TELEPHONED FULBRIGHT AS SOON AS HE HEARD ABOUT THE SENATE DISCUSSION AND TOLD HIM: "I MADE A MISTAKE AND I SINCERELY REGRET IT."

IT WAS LATER ANNOUNCED HELMS WOULD BE CALLED TO TODAY'S FOREIGN RELATIONS MEETING, PRESUMABLY TO DISCUSS THE CIA'S CLANDESTINE ACTIVITIES, BUT MORE THAN LIKELY TO BE GIVEN A CHANCE FOR A PERSONAL APOLOGY.